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MY PAINTED TREE
AND
OTHER POEMS

BY ALLEN AYRAULT GREEN

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and

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Dedication

This book I dedicate to everyone
Who reads it through, and finds when it is done,
That it was worth the while the time they spent,
E'en if the minutes by great tasks were lent.
So, reader, if you're pleased when you are through,
I pride in dedicating it to you.

—THE AUTHOR.

Preface

In presenting this book the author wishes to thank the several magazines and newspapers which have allowed him to republish the verses. The poems were collected and reprinted in book form on account of several childrens' rhymes which seemed, unexpectedly to the author, to attract the attention of his friends.

The author also wishes to state that the cover illustration is a hand-made photogravure on satin, printed in his book-shop on Tompkins which is in the College Town of Galesburg, Illinois. There were but three hundred books printed, the number of this one being

My Painted Tree

and

Other Poems

By

Allen Ayrault Green

With Pictures by the Author

Nineteen Hundred and Four

My Painted Tree

'Tis the quiet hour. The day is done.
I rest my oars in the setting sun.
And as I drift on the mirrored lake
The colored beams, now well a-slake,
Paint with a fairy brush for me
A mirrored picture of a tree.

The scraggy limbs 'gainst the yellow sky
Web the golden dome on high;
While well below, by no breezes blown
Is the painted tree in another dome;
And with the life of a graceful snake
It twists and squirms in the golden lake.

There's gold above and gold below;
There's a shimmer in one while the other's aglow;
There's a tree that stands in the dome o'erhead,
Whose branches crackle; the tree is dead;
Yet the golden brush with its movement slow,
Instills with life the tree below.

In the golden sea my oars I ply,
And I splash the gold, and the gold drops fly;
Then I take one farewell look behind,
But my painted tree I cannot find;
The waves from my boat must have washed ashore
My painted tree,—for it is no more.

The Train of the Woods

"Ding! ding! ding!" ring the sky-blue bells;
"All right!" shouts Bob White in the grass.
The cricket's hissing song
Blows the steam as they go 'long,
And the warty little toad
Acts as switchman of the road,
For he squats near the signal as they pass.

The snow-white clover makes the clean roadbed,
The red clover ballasts well, too,
The swamp-bird's squeal
Sounds a good hot wheel;
And the bees gath'ring honey
Are collectors of the money;
While the blue heron goes,—"Choo,-choo!"

The locusts on the trees make the blowing safety-valve;
For the signal waves the red, red rose;
The hiss of the snake
Sounds a good air-brake,
And the ants never shirk
From their filling-in work,
As the train of the woods onward goes.

Let's off for the woods where this new train runs,
Away where the world is still;
We'll lie on our backs
Across the smooth tracks,
For the roadbed is clover,
And you're never run over:
The train of the woods won't kill.

Hear the clear "all right!" and the "choo, choo, choo!"
The boiler is filled with steam,
'Tis turning night,
And the fire-flies' light,
Shows the engineer,
There's nothing to fear;
And the train runs on while we dream.

But now 'tis late, and the lightning-bug lamps
Turn dim, and the crickets are still;
The cars run slow,
Yet on they go,
Now creeping along
With a faint "ding, dong!"
Away—way over the hill.

The light again in the early morn
Soon brings the wood-train back;
It comes with a rush
Through thicket and brush;
It comes with a bound,
With a rattling sound,
As it rolls again over the track.

The tickets are free on the train of the woods,
If you give the conductor a smile,
So come with me,
Lie under the tree,
We'll side by side,
On the wood-train ride:
Come on! 'twill be worth the while!

Our Soldier Boys

Tramp! Tramp! Tramp!
And the sound of a soldier's drum;
And I wonder now as I step to the door
If the battle's lost or won.

I hear the tramp on the pavement;
I hear the notes of the fife;
I think of the rumbling cannon's roar,
And I dream of the warrior's life.

I strain my eyes for the fighters bold,
As the drum sounds closer by,
And wildly I rush to the open air
To see the troops come nigh.

As I make my way to the brick-paved street
I hear the loud command:
"Halt! play your fife, now beat your drum;
For this is the soldier's land!"

But the voice doesn't sound like a captain's bold;
The drum-sticks bang on the drum;
The fife doesn't seem to play any tune:
It can't be the soldiers come.

And then as my eyes turn down the street,
I laugh at the sight I see,
For the soldier boys I expect to cheer
Are the children who live near me.

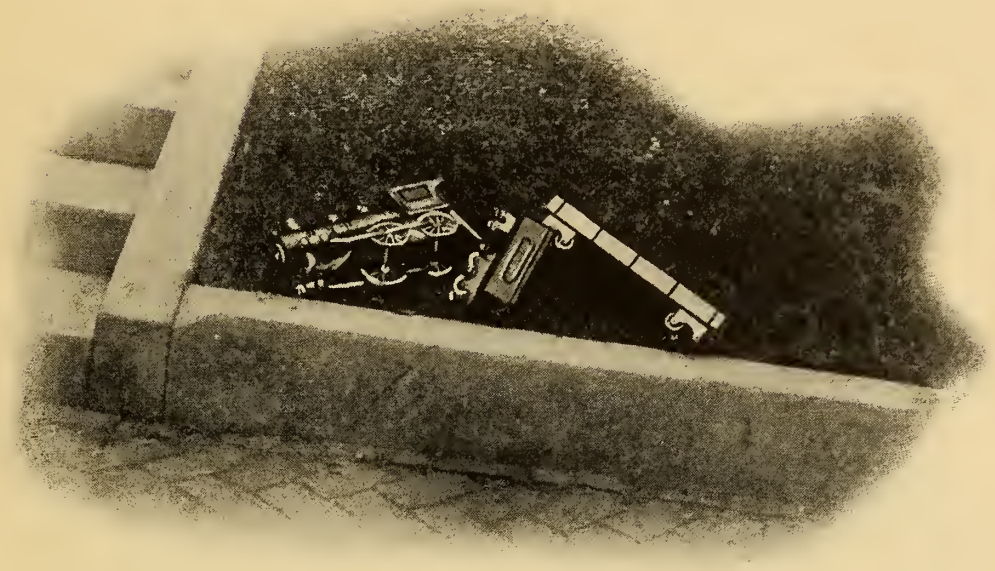
'Tis General Arthur who carries the sword,
And Arthur's sister the drum,
While Whit blows the shrill notes out from the fife,
And Lawrence carries the gun.

"Hurrah for the soldier boys!" I cry,
"Beat loud on the drum! blow the fife!
Cheer, boys, every time a victory's won,
Prepare for the battles of life!"

"In your little sham battles you always succeed;
'Tis victory ever you see;
So shout out your orders! charge with your steed!
Know nothing but victory!"

"Then when the summoning bugle calls,
You're ready at once with your gun,
Port arms! dismissed! receive your reward!
Your work is pronounced 'Well Done!'"

A Wreck on Toy Railroad



There's a wreck on Toy Railroad, I see,
A train has jumped the track;
Dispatch the wrecker as soon as you can,
They must get the wrecked train back.

Send for the President of the road;
Summon the Roadmaster, quick;
Bring every workman that you can,
Armed with a shovel and pick.

There's a wreck in Toyland, near the bridge:
Dewey, the new compound,
Ran through an open switch at the curve
And stuck her proud nose in the ground.

Who's to blame for this accident?
Wire the railroad men!
Send a special as quick as you can
To the curve near Concrete Glen!

You say they are coming? I see but one;
Perhaps he's the President;
I say, sir—where is the wrecker kept,
Has not the news been sent?

"I am the wrecker," is his reply;
"I am the President;
I am the Master-of-the-Road;
No messages need be sent!"

And lowering a slender arm
With all his main and might
He grapples with his finger-hooks,
And lifts the engine, right.

The track is cleared of all debris,
The car that makes the train
Is coupled to the tender near
And all is well again.

"Toot, toot, toot, toot!" the engine cries,
They're off for the new depot.
Good-bye to the train of the Toyland Road,
May the whistle forever blow.

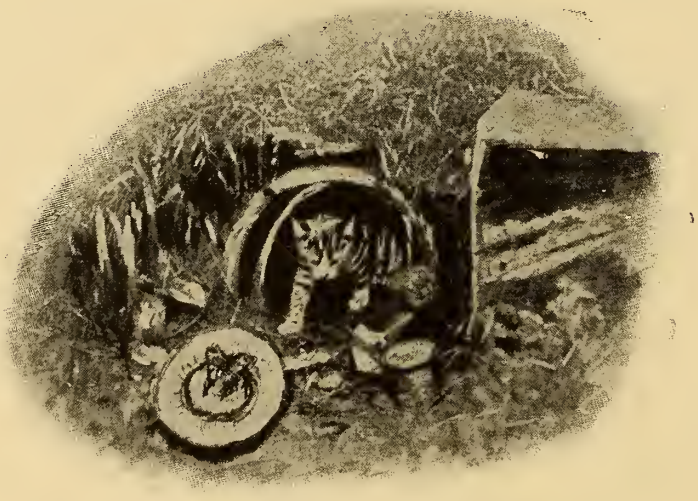
Let the Toy Road live for ages on,
With the owner for President
And Wrecker and Roadman and Laborer too;
May no message for help be sent.

My boy this Road is soon forgot,
But those little wrecks you cleared
Will help clear many a wreck in life,
On the Road that others have feared.

Be always your Wrecker and President!
Don't send your messages home.
He that succeeds does not wait for help
But clears his own track, alone.

God Saw the Child

I saw a little kitten in the strangest place,
And it had the softest hair,
With stripes on its legs and stripes on its face,
And stripes on its ears and everywhere;
And stripes on its back and stripes on its tail;
And a dog chased it into a large drain tile
Where it made its home for the longest while.
Now what do you think of a home like that
For a real clean, little, striped cat?



And what do you s'pose this kitten ate
('Cause all cats have to eat)?
A good little girl fed it out of a plate
That was filled with bread and milk and meat,—
Now wasn't she good to a strange little kitten?
Of course she was!—and what do you think?
One day this cat came out for a drink
Of milk, and it sang to the child so dear
A song which only the child could hear.

And the child put her hand on the striped fur
And smoothed the nice, soft hair,
And the cat continued its loving purr
To a child that was dear, and a child that was fair;
And the child seemed to know what the kitten said,
For she lifted the kitten that lived alone
And carried it gently to her home.
And God saw the kitten and heard its purr,
And He saw the child,—and remembered her.

Leslie's Bonfire

Out from the houses here and there
Shouts of children filled the air;
Shoes on sidewalks made such clatter
The neighbors all wondered what was the matter.
Windows flew open on every side;

Mothers were calling and babies cried;
Dogs were barking up the street
At the stomp on the pavement of little feet.
The cats when they heard the dogs all bark
Went tearing across the street in the dark;

And by the noise one would have thought
That madness on the place was wrought.

Then suddenly there flashed a light
That gleamed and glistened on the night;
It stole across the pavement sleek,
And made its way clear up the street,
Till neighbors thought that end of town
Was just about to be burned down.
Loud slammed the doors, as quick with fright
The people rushed to find the light.
They stumbled down the steps and stairs;
They fell on tables, stools and chairs;
The servants dropping pans and kettles
Increased the din with clash of metals.
The tired horses munching hay
Forgot to eat and loud did neigh.
And all this (if I'm not a liar)
Was caused by Leslie's big bonfire.

As quick the children found the place
The fire lit each happy face;
And 'round and 'round the flames they danced;
Some they hopped and some they pranced;
Some, they sang and some, unlearned,
Ventured close as the fire burned.
The shouts went up while the flames leaped higher,
And 'round and 'round twirled the reddened spire.
And this is the end of the sudden light
Which gleamed on Tompkins street that night.
That part of town didn't burn at all,
And the same thing happens every fall;
For the tumult and noise that seemed so dire
Were naught but my neighbor's big bonfire.

Dat Kid O' Mine

Here, ma boy, giv' me a ches'nut,
An' be sho' yo' crack it, too,
Fo' yo' know yo' grandad's crackers
Am now worn an' mighty few.

Dere, dat's right, tek' de hole meat out,
Fo' yo' dear ole grandad's sake,
Dat's a good boy,—all de shell off;
Makes ma jaw begin ter shake.

What! yo' gwine now ter eat it
An' not giv' grandad a bit?
Ain't yer 'shamed when he's done brought yo'
Up as any man see fit?

All right, eat it,—den some day when
Yo' wants granpa's knife ter cut,
Mebbe he'll turn roun' an' tell yo'
'Bout der day yo' ate dat nut.

Makin' fun o' yo' po' grandad,
Kase his ole teet' am worn down,
Neber mine,—yo'll be dere honey
When yo' gray hairs come aroun'.

Chaw now!—Oh, I t'ought you's playin',
Jist a chawin' on yo' tongue,
Foolin' ole grandad, an' actin'
Like mos' boys when dey am young.

Dere,—I knewed he'd giv' it to me,
  Climbin' up on granpa's knee,
An' er stickin' dat 'ere kernel
  In his mout' far's he can see.

Laws dat's good!—an' ma boy cracked it;
  Um, but it does taste so fine;
Not bekase it am a chestnut,
  But it's from "Dat Kid O' Mine."

Little Margie and Tattine

Little Margie and Tattine—
Sweetest children ever seen;
Cheeks puffed out like apple-dumplin',
Round as peaches, balls or somethin'.
Little dolly on the sill
Looking very, very ill,

Just s'spose the rag-man comes
Takes your dolly an' just runs,
Throws her in the sack outside;
Takes her for a long, long ride,—
Never see her here again.

Hark! that sounds like the rag-man
Coming through the front door there;
Tuck your dolly in the chair,
Stick those feet of dolly's in;
Then he'll think that dolly's been
Visiting,—just gone away
And not coming back to-day.

Guess the rag-man wasn't coming,
Must have been some bad boys running
On the porch,—see, there they go
Chasing past the big window!
Don't know why I am so mean
Scaring Margie and Tattine.

Good their papa hasn't come—
Then maybe he'd make *me* run.
But I can't help fooling you—
Like to see what kids will do.

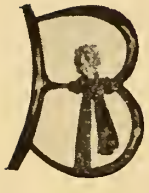
Ragman doesn't take away
Things with which girls want to play;
Just takes rags that mama'd throw
Out, and things like that you know.
Now don't you get scared at all
When you hear somebody call
That the ragman's coming near,
You just play that you don't hear.
Scary people's just as mean,
Aren't they—Margie and Tattine?

Mary's Dream

ear Mary, oh so tired out
A-running in the yards about,
Went willingly to bed one night
Without the slightest bit of fright,
And when she closed her little eyes
She heard the strangest, tiniest cries,—
"Dear little girl, sit up in bed,
So you can hear just what is said."

Now, Mary didn't seem to scare,
And so she raised herself up there
And did what you or I would do,
Just listened,—then right from her shoe
A-lying on the floor near by,
There came the faintest little cry,
And there she sat and heard it say:
"Oh, my! I'm tired out to-day,
And oh, oh, oh, but I don't see
Why she can't have more shoes like me.
Now see that little waist up there
A-hanging on the rocking-chair;
Why, in the walnut bureau drawer
I know of six or seven more.
The one that she put on to-day
Is now so dusty from her play
That it will have a whole week's rest;
And maybe two weeks at the best.
Just look at me, all wet and worn;
One of my sides is somewhat torn;

I'm tired scraping on the floor
And being bumped against the door."
But hardly had he finished this
When on his toe he felt a kiss:
"Oh, my dear love," someone replied,
And standing there near by his side
The clear voice of his mate spoke up
As she herself was cursing luck,
"Alas!" she said, "what shall we be
When with our eyes we cannot see?
Oh, we are wearing out so fast
I dread to think upon the last."
But he replied with little fear,
"The last is first with shoes, my dear,
So if the last is past with us
Then why should we now make a fuss?
The worst has passed both me and you;
Is not that logic for a shoe?"



ut as he finished with his say
A necktie (colored up quite gay)
Turned out its glaring side of gold,
And said in manner, oh so bold,
"You stop that noise! you can't complain!
You're nearly driving me insane!
Now here I live, oh curse my fate,
Without e'en hearing of a mate;
You shoes have found your mates you see,
Your lives are happy as can be;
But me,—I can't find any wife,
I've simply wasted all my life.
I know I am a pretty beau,
And yet some say I'm not, you know.
Still I'm a beau-knot, don't you see?
It's just as plain as plain can be."

"Your jokes are coarse," a stocking said,
Who now the conversation led.
"I know I have at times conceit,
Although I always meet de-feat.
I'm held up often, I'll admit,
The holdup, I myself, see fit;
Although when fitted well to see,
I'm held up for a leg-a-cy."

" h, what a joke," a button cried,
As quick the stocking it had spied;
"If you could only hang by me,
I'd hold you up so easily;
And yet my holdups, on my soul,
They seem to put me in the hole."

"What nonsense!" cried a black hairpin,
"Your arguments they make me grin,
Now here am I, held up in air,
All choked and pinched by lots of hair.
I never steal; it's very wrong;
Yet I've been steel my whole life long.
And if the point you cannot see,
Just step up very near to me;
It's hard to see the point of steel;
The point is easier to feel."

" lunt, blunt!" a tiny needle cried,
With piping voice, yet dignified,
"An eye like mine can plainly see
Your point's as dull as dull can be,
And I am sharp—I'll prove it now,"
So then he made a little bow

And so to do just what he said,
He walked right over toward the bed;
Then he began to grow so tall,
His eye no longer appeared small,
His awful stare scared Mary so,
Her little bed shook to and fro;
The needle crawled upon the spread
And then with a loud voice it said:
"Mary, I've come to prove to you
That I'm a sticker, tried and true."
And Mary, frightened by the song
Wasn't very, very long
In pulling up her little toes,
(For kids get scared as each one knows
When dreaming about things that bite
And stick into them in the night).
But when she'd covered up her head
She felt him walking on the bed;
And then, when she commenced to feel
A something sticking in her heel,
She screamed so loud that she awoke,
And saw her brother—just for joke—
A-standing by her little bed;
And when he looked at her, he said:
"Oh, my!" and laughing ran from her,
And there upon the comforter
She saw a pin as black as soot,
Which brother'd stuck into her foot.
She heard him run and slam the door,
And then she jumped out on the floor,
And dressed herself, just oh, so fast,
For Mary never could be last—
To breakfast.

The Happy Colored Boy

You happy little kid, just as cute as you can be,
Even if your skin is black and yellow;
Those smiles upon your face seem to hide away the color;
You're full of happiness, you little fellow.

You've two teeth out and you have snarly hair,—
That hole in your sweater's getting bigger,
But that smile upon your face is the first thing that I see,
You're a happy, healthy, jolly, little nigger.

Those big black eyes set in ivory white,
Always looking white folks through and through;
Those dirty overalls with those torn shoulder straps
Seem clean enough for you.

Won't you sell me one smile that I may take it home
And make my little white boys glad?
Come, speak up!—ten dollars for a smile!—
Will fifty do, my happy little lad?

You can't sell it to me?—well here, take a dime,
I stole a part of one just now;
And yet you're a-smiling as broadly as before;
Come, take the fifty,—boy, and tell me how!

You wont?—you say that you'd like to if you could,
But they're hard to give to folks that's white?
Yes, maybe that's so, you lucky little kid,
When I think of it, I guess you're right.

Colored people always seem to have no cares,
They're happier than any other race;
And every time a colored boy meets you on the street,
A smile lightens up his colored face.

White folks can't smile the way you do,
There's surely something that they lack;
I believe God Almighty, when He colored up your skin,
Put some smiles with the yellow and the black.

W'en I Runned Away

Onc't I runned and runned
So awful far away,
'At I runned and runned and runned so far
'At I des' tan't say.

And w'en I didn't runned no more,
I des' sitted down,
An' dere was lots of whitestest
Flowers drowin' 'roun'.

An' w'en I was des' pictin' one
Somefin' I didn't see
Was blowin' an' a blowin'
Its bref right at me.

I des' touldn't turn aroun',
Nen w'en I member'd how,
I saw the biggest, biggestest,
Biggestestest cow.

So I des' runned an' runned
So far I tan't say,
'Till I dot tlear home adain
An' dere I'm doin' to stay.

Way Up in Dreamland

I know a place for girls an' boys
W'ere all the streets are full of toys,
An' all the schools are places w'ere
You whisper an' no teachers care
For w'at you do; you can throw chalk,
An' play an' stomp, an' even talk

Out loud; the seats are all of plush;
No teacher goes 'roun' saying, "Hush!"
You jus' go there an' play, an' run
An' have the mostest lot of fun.

I go there every night or two
An' w'en I come home I'm so blue;
I'd like to stay there all the time,
Cause Ma says I don't fret and whine
When I am in that pretty town;
I seldom cry, or scold, or frown.

You go to that land on the road
That carries people by the load
Who ride on this train every night,
An' sometimes they go when it's light.
The track is jes' as smooth an' nice,
The train it slides jes' like on ice;
There are no bumps or bridges there,
They cross the rivers in the air;
The cars are awful clean an' white
On this nice train 'at runs at night.

The one I take on this long ride
Has tiny wheels on which to glide;
It doesn't move, you'll be surprised,
Until I start to close my eyes,
An' nen it goes so smooth and still
An' seems to kind of move up hill,
Nen sometimes w'en the hill is steep
I turn an' hear the car-springs squeak,
An' nen I open up my eyes,
An' there I find to my surprise

'At I am in the same depot
From which I started, long ago.
It's quite a ride to where I mean,
To that big city they call "Dream".

An' w'en I go there I don't like
To come right back w'en it is light,
For sometimes w'en nurse wakes me up
I'm just about to drink a cup
Of chocolate, or I'm walkin' 'roun'
A pickin' candy off the groun',
An' always w'en I hear her call
I drop these fings an' let 'em fall;
I try to hold 'em jes' as tight,
But I can't hold on fings at night;
The candy I have in my hand,
Is all gone, w'en I leave Dreamland.

You see such funny fings up there
W'en riding high up in the air.
You see folks 'at you never knew,
An' nen you see your playmates, too,
An' sometimes w'en your playin' games
You can't fink of the children's names.
Their arms they stretch clear 'roun' the ring,
An' nen they all begin to sing
An' dance an' laugh an' whirl aroun';
But never fall down on the groun',
An' if they did they wouldn't care
Cause tain't real groun' up in the air.

I know once w'en I was up high
A playin' games up in the sky,
I met a little girl so dear
I used to play with, right down here.

But once she died, an' mama said,
She'd gone to Heaven with the dead.
But I fink mama wasn't right,
Cause w'en I saw her in the night,
She sang, an' played, an' she laughed so,
Jes' like she used to, long ago.
Nen w'en I took the train for home
She ran an' lef' me, all alone.
I fink she might rode home wif me
An' be jes' like she used to be.
But then—I s'pose she's happy there,
Way up in Dreamland, in the air.

The Old Quartet

You kin talk erbout yer oppery an' high-toned classic song;
You kin talk erbout yer trainin' ter make yer voices strong;
I've heerd this talk since I wuz born, but I kaint see it yet,
Thet there's enny high-toned singin' beats the old quartet.

I've bin to the Grand Oppery, heerd Melby, Emmy Ame;
I've heerd all them Bostonyans and others of ther fame;
You all may call thet music, but I've got my corn ter bet,
Thet there's nawthin' here on this earth, like the old quartet.

Walked inter town this afternoon an' back afore its night.
There's Bill's voice stickin' out ahead; by gum I b'leve he's tight;
Them fellers kaint help drinkin'; ther the wurst I heerd of yet;
But be still!—you hear thet singin'—thet's the old quartet.

Lean back agin the fence now, an' wait till they come near;
The sun's past settin' in the West, yet it's almost as clear
As if in this late evenin' 'twere shinin' brightly yet;
See 'em comin' up the hill there?—thet's the old quartet.

Smart lookin' lads, now haint they?—every one of 'em kin plow;
A finer workin' set o' boys you couldn't find nohow.
Here, give us Swanee River, there's a tune thet's my old pet,
When I hear it in the evenin', by the old quartet.

Thet's the one,—why pard, you don't know what a comfort 'tis to hear
A good old song like thet is; I tell you there's somethin' queer
About them boys; it's born in 'um; I'd hev 'em study yet,
But I'm feerd the edicatin' mebbe'd spoil the old quartet.

Of course in thet there oppery where them there big guns sing,
The people have to clap as if they liked most every thing;
But jist you let 'em git away from thet there stuck up set,
They'll stop right in the corner, jist to hear the old quartet.

They say you ought to study thet there hominy an' such,
But when yer come right down, I think ther studyin' tew much;
I may need edicatin', but not in thet line quite yet;
God giv' me my instructin', an' I'll teke the "Old Quartet."

Alma and I

Breezy?—Just a little.
Light?—Only the moon.
Weather?—Very warm all day.
Time?—Quite late in June.

Where?—Upon the silvery lake.
Who?—Alma and I.
Fun?—Well now, what would you think?
Love?—Hush!—bye and bye.

Curls?—A-floating in the breeze.
Eyes?—Blue as the sea.
Hands?—Soft, slender, graceful quite.
Lips?—Please don't ask me.

I?—Sat in my new canoe.
She?—Also sat there.
Boat?—Quite still upon the lake.
Where?—I don't know where.

Mother?—Sitting comfortably.
Where?—Upon the shore.
Frightened?—No, not in the least.
Why?—She'd loved before.

Arms?—Hers clasped in fond embrace.
Mine?—In the same fix.
Why?—I had to hold her in.
Because?—She's only six.

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